



Good evening Co-Chairs, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee,

My name is Mark Overmyer-Velázquez, I am an Associate Professor of History and Director of the Institute of Latino, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies.

I work in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and have worked at UConn for eleven years.

I also volunteer in an elected political position as Chairman of the West Hartford Board of Education.

My roles as a town official and university professor have allowed to me appreciate the support the state of Connecticut has done for education from pre-kindergarten through university and how difficult a task it is to pass a balanced budget. But we need to do more to support our systems of public education. We need to continue to be national leaders on this vital issue for our children, our students, and the overall health of our state.

A \$40 million reduction to the appropriation would cause long term damage to the many gains and successes we have achieved in recent years at UConn and in academic units like mine.

Faculty in my Institute draw on their diverse origins and experiences as Latinos and Latin Americans to actively engage critical problems impacting our state and the world of today. These include access to health care, the education of at-risk youth, racial equity, immigration reform, and economic development in the Americas.

The Institute serves as an intellectual core at the university to address issues of a rapidly diversifying U.S. population in which Latinos represent the single largest minority, over 50 million strong and growing rapidly. Connecticut's Latinos account for fifteen percent of the state and are a part of the country's fastest growing college age population.

Our graduates have gone on to work in Connecticut in education, cultural, business, government, and not-for-profit organizations, and many go on to pursue advanced degrees.

With more funding cuts, our academic programs will not be able to continue to adequately support faculty and students. Students like one of our BA candidates in Latino Studies, Zachary Trust.

Son of Bolivian migrants, Zach Trust diligently has benefited from the courses and programs offered through the Institute. Although due to family pressures he once considered dropping out of UConn, today he is poised to graduate in May, that much closer to achieving his goal of becoming a high school social studies teacher in Connecticut. As part of his degree, he has conducted independent research in the Wallingford public school system where he connected

**El Instituto: Institute of Latina/o,
Caribbean, & Latin American Studies**

2006 HILLSIDE ROAD, UNIT 1161
STORRS, CT 06269-1161
PHONE 860.486.5508
FAX 860.486.3794
www.elin.uconn.edu

An Equal Opportunity Employer

students with their counterparts in South America via webcam technology. As a leading member of the student organization Students without Borders, he volunteers his time to raise awareness about immigrant rights. And recently he won our competitive Endowed Lawrence Goodwin Fellowship to study abroad in Bolivia, and learn about and visit for the first time his family's country.

Deep cuts to UConn would reverse the progress made at our university and in the Institute and deeply hurt students like Zach.

While other states are not investing in their state flagship university, our legislature has made strategic investments that have enabled us to achieve this amazing progress.

I encourage you to continue to be national leaders in education by supporting UConn's academic programs that add so much to our communities and state as a whole.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Overmyer-Velázquez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being the most prominent.

Mark Overmyer-Velázquez
Director, El Instituto
Associate Professor of History
mark.velazquez@uconn.edu